PARTNERS IN FLIGHT

Oregon/Washington Chapter

www.gorge.net/natres/pif.html Fall 2001

Partners In Flight is an international coalition of government agencies, conservation groups, academic institutions, private organizations and citizens dedicated to the long-term maintenance of healthy populations of native landbirds

NAWCA Council Supports Integrated Projects

The North American Wetlands Conservation Act's council historically focused on the North American wetland ecosystems conservation and waterfowl as well as the conservation of other migratory birds, fish and wildlife. Over the past four years, an average of $44 million has been available annually to meet the purposes of the Act.

At its March 2001 meeting, the council said it will give priority to projects that demonstrate contributions to major international and national migratory bird conservation plans. The council said it will direct its staff to highlight projects that as a whole provide major contributions to bird conservation across all wetland-associated taxonomic groups.

The council highlights projects that taken as a whole slate will provide major contributions to bird conservation across all wetland-associated taxonimic groups. For example, a project on the Rio Grande, and a project that has benefits for Henslow's Sparrows and Golden-winged Warblers. The approvals followed a council request in December 2000 that projects wetland-associated birds throughout the country be brought to the table.

Conference to Focus on Implementation

The third Partners In Flight International Conference will be held March 20-24, 2002 at the Asilomar State Park Conference Center near Monterey, California.

Register while there's still room!

The conference will focus on implementing all-bird conservation actions identified by Partners In Flight, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the U. S. Shorebird Conservation Plan and the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan. There will be a strong international component with session chairs and presenters from the U. S., Canada, Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.

Our Newsletter is now totally electronic!

The Oregon/Washington Partners in Flight semi-annual newsletter is now available only online, meaning that we will no longer be distributing hard copies via snail mail. We encourage you to save paper by viewing this newsletter online and forwarding the web address to others.

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A Primer on the Bird Point Count Database

What is it?

The Bird Point Count Database is a tool for land managers and biologists to manage their bird point count and associated vegetation data. It is a software program built to give full control over data for your site, including creating new points and transects, entering and editing data, and performing custom queries by date, species, or geography. What makes this database different from standard database software is that it all takes place through a web browser, and in doing so allows others (e.g. Partners in Flight) to share or combine your data. While you can access your data almost as though it were stored on your own computer, you do not have to perform data backups, and you do not have to spend much time preparing custom data reports for partners – they can query the database themselves. More benefits of this centralization follow. Some explanations of who is involved in the database can be found at the website (address below). The database is being built by USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and theAmerican Bird Conservancy; however many experts from around the continent have given input and continues to do so.

Status

The database is ready for limited use now, and is in beta testing. What this means is that data entry works for the bulk of point counts out there, including entering of basic vegetation data. The data retrieval functions are still being built, and right now people can get point and transect-level data back immediately. The public-access portion of data retrieval is not available yet, and is a lower priority than getting data back to those who collected it. (For those who have already entered data, I can send them their complete data sets on request – so it's always available for those who need it immediately). We are working now on slowly adding users through the end of the calendar year so that we increase the load gradually, and at the same time adding data validation and other features. Also, the database can hold distance and double-observer method counts. Some experts recommend these methods because they incorporate a measure of detectability and thus lend vigor to point counts. However, the interface to enter these counts is not yet complete. Anyone wishing

Data Fields

Count data fields can be perused at http://www.mp2-pwrc.usgs.gov/point/test/help.
This is the beta version of the database, and the help section does not require login. You may choose Data Fields from the menu there and see data fields described for all aspects of point count data stored in the database. Soon the “test/” part of the web address will be removed. The original website at http://www.mp2-pwrc.usgs.gov/point will be overwritten with updated information in the new site.

Contact Mark Wimer to get started using the database:mark_wimer@usgs.gov (310) 497-5596

Learning from the Past - by Susan Earnst

A project in arid west begins showing that removing livestock from riparian zones equals greater bird abundance

East of the Cascades, in southeastern Oregon and northwestern Nevada, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is doing its best to reverse the result of years of arid land grazing on Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge and Sheldon National Wildlife Range. From the the refuges' early history (both were established in 1936 for pronghorn antelope conservation) until the early 1990's, livestock grazed freely on these refuges.

As with other arid lands, the effects of grazing domestic livestock are different and more severe than those of native grazers. Riparian habitats suffer particularly. During the heat of the day for example, cows head for cool, shaded stream to loaf and graze on the nearby succulent vegetation, causing considerable damage to understory nesting bird habitat. Not only do cattle deplete and sometimes eliminate riparian vegetation by grazing on the herbaceous layer and browsing on shrubs and young trees, they also cause soil compaction, channel widening, and lowering of the water table.

Roughly 60% of the migratory landbirds in the arid west depend on riparian habitats. Bird density is often two to ten times higher in riparian zones than in adjacent non-riparian habitats. Many of these species nest either on the ground or within two meters of it, and low-nesting birds are most affected by cattle grazing. Fortunately, strong refuge management has resulted in cow-free refuges on Hart and Sheldon, and as elsewhere in the west, when cows are removed from specific areas vegetation and birds respond.

The Sheldon-Hart refuge complex has dedicated itself to a long-term monitoring program - three years of study in every 10 - to document the recovery process. The study, initiated by the refuge complex, the USFWS Migratory Bird Division, Bill Pyle, and Dr. David Dobkin in 1991, was expanded in 2000 and 2001 by Dr. Susan Earnst (USGS) and Jennifer Ballard (USFWS) with the support of the refuges and the Migratory Bird Division. The intent of the research is to improve the effectiveness of refuge management for songbirds by assessing the effect of riparian cover types, vegetative structure within cover types, and management practices, particularly the cessation of cattle grazing, on songbird abundance.

With concern over songbird declines in the west, and the initiation of similar monitoring and assessment programs in the area, an important component of the current study is the establishment of a monitoring program with regional comparability and relevance. Dr. Dobkin's research (Dobkin et al. 1988) showed that herbaceous vegetation improved by the third year after cattle removal, consistent with

Riparian*/Continued from page 3*

What started as a review of select riparian corridors, has been expanded to nearly completely cover all riparian streams on both Refuges with the current study. The expanded sample size should allow greater scrutiny of differences in habitat structure and bird community composition in different types of riparian stands. In addition, a nest monitoring component has been added, to evaluate the true measure of success of habitat restoration – increased bird productivity.

Monitoring the results of habitat restoration efforts is essential to the Partners in Flight mission. Only by monitoring can land managers evaluate the effectiveness of restoration decisions and improve methods as necessary. At least on one set of refuges the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is accomplishing that goal. Hopefully the resulting data will be useful to the entire bird conservation community with similar goals on both public and private lands.

For additional information contact Michael Green, 503/872-2707, or Susan Earnst, 208/426-5209

Lit. Cited

Dobkin, D.S. 1994. Community composition and habitat affinities of riparian birds on the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge, 1991-1993. Final Report submitted to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 1, Office of Migratory Birds, Portland, OR.

The Great Washington Birding Trail

Primary funding has been secured for the Cascades Birding Trail (SR 20 and 2), the first in a series of birding trails to assist birders and naturalists in Washington as they search to discover birds in various ecological settings. The Cascades Birding Trail will highlight species found in the Skagit and Methow valleys , the Cascades Mountains and other interconnecting ecological communities. The Washington office of the National Audubon Society, Division of Tourism and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife are currently spear heading the project.

The Great Washington Birding Trail when completed will provide recreational, educational and conservation opportunities and unify existing and new Washington birding sites into a single, cohesive marketing entity. More than 365 species of birds can be found in Washington and according to a recent tourism report 70% of the visitors to Washington think that it is a great place to see birds and wildlife.

Audubon's Important Bird Areas and Washington's Scenic Highways are also key elements of the trail system. Many birding sites have been tentatively identified along the route and new sites will be identified in future months as public meetings are conducted in nearby communities during October and November. Broad public support has moved

Register early for the PIF national conference March 20-24, 2002 in Monterey, California. Space is expected to be limited.

Information and conference topics are available online at

www.prbo.org/PIF/NPIF2002.htm

What is Partners In Flight?

Glad you asked!

Partners in Flight was launched in 1990 in response to growing concerns about declines in the populations of many land bird species, and in order to emphasize the conservation of birds not covered by existing conservation initiatives. The initial focus was on species that breed in the Nearctic (North America) and winter in the Neotropics (Central and South America), but today the focus has spread to include most landbirds and other species requiring terrestrial habitats.

Strengthened linkages with other conservation efforts is leading, at least in some cases, to comprehensive conservation for all native birds. The central premise of Partners in Flight has been that the resources of public and private organizations in North and South America must be combined, coordinated, and increased in order to achieve success in conserving bird populations in this hemisphere.

Partners In Flight is a cooperative effort involving partnerships among federal, state and local government agencies, philanthropic foundations, professional organizations, conservation groups, industry, the academic community, and private individuals. Currently partners include 16 federal agencies, 40 nongovernment organizations (NGOs), more than 60 state and provincial fish and wildlife agencies, numerous universities, and the forest industry, and the list is growing daily. A complete list of contacts is available in the directory section of the national website. All Partners In Flight meetings are open to anyone interested in bird conservation and we eagerly seek your contribution.

The goal of Partners In Flight is to focus resources on improving monitoring and inventory of native birds as well as focusing on research, management and education programs involving birds and their habitats. The strategy is to stimulate cooperative public and private sector efforts in North America and the neotropics to meet these goals. The power of Partners in Flight lies in the synergy that builds when diverse, committed groups who care about birds work together for a common goal.

“Keeping common birds common”

Scientists say the West Nile virus may reach Central America and California by early 2002

from the Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- The West Nile virus is likely to spread farther south and west, possibly reaching Central America and California by early next year.

The virus, which is transmitted to humans, birds, horses and other animals by infected mosquitoes, has been reported this year in 20 states -- mostly in the Northeast -- and the District of Columbia.

Scientists said as millions of birds head south for the winter, they threaten to move the virus to states along the Gulf coast, which have warmer climates and are a haven for mosquitoes.

When the birds migrate in the Spring, the virus could then spread to Midwestern and Western states.

"I see it happening, how soon we don't know," Robert McLean, director of the National Wildlife Health Center at the U.S. Geological Survey, told members of Congress in a briefing Monday.

West Nile first appeared in North America in 1999. This year, 15 human cases have been confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control. One person has died.

Steve Ostroff, federal West Nile coordinator at the CDC, said that while the virus is spreading, fewer than 1 percent of the people bitten by an infected mosquito will become seriously ill.

The West Nile virus causes a flulike illness. For older people and those
with weak immune systems, it can cause deadly encephalitis, or inflammation

WEBSITES

Partners In Flight
www.partnersinflight.org
National PIF Bird Conservation Plans
www.blm.gov/wildlife/pifplans.htm
Colorado Bird Observatory
www.cbobirds.org
Point Reyes Bird Observatory
www.prbo.org
BIRDNET
www.nhnh.si.edu/birdnet
North American Important Bird Areas
www.cec.org
Conservation and Reinvestment Act
www.teaming.com or www.house.gov/resources/ocs
NAWCA Grant Process
www.northamerican.fws.gov/nawcahp.html
Cape May PIF Proceedings
www.birds.cornell.edu/pifcapemay
Raptor Research Foundation
www.biology.boisestate.edu/raptor
Sagebrush Bird Display
www.id.blm.gov/iso/912/enviroed.html
Smithsonian Institute Migratory Bird Center
web2.si.edu/smbc
Royal Blue Organics Cafe Mam
www.cafemam.com
Equal Exchange
www.equalexchange.com/index.html
Thanksgiving Coffee Company
www.thanksgivingcoffee.com
American Bird Conservancy
www.abcbirds.org
Cats Indoors!
Link to this through ABC's website
DOD
www.dodpif.org
EPA
www.epa.gov/owow/birds
USFWS
www.r1.fws.gov
Audubon Society of Portland
www.audubonportland.org
Hawkwatch International
www.hawkwatch.org
Oregon Breeding Bird Atlas
www.teleport.com/~guide/atlas/atlas.htm
Index of Sustainable development in the Americas
www2.planeta.com/mader/headlines.html
Cornell Lab of Ornithology
birds.cornell.edu/pifcapemay
Environmental Journalism Resources
www2.planeta.com/mader/ecotravel/period/period.html
Exploring Ecotourism
www2.planeta.com/mader/ecotravel/etour.html
North American Cowbird Advisory Council
http://cowbird.lscf.ucsb.edu/

The Oregon/Washington Partners In Flight newsletter is published twice yearly in Spring and Fall.

To submit an article for consideration, please e-mail Jenny_Valdivia@r1.fws.gov

We are always interested in hearing what YOU are doing to conserve native landbirds. Drop us a line today!

Oregon Zoo to join Condor Breeding Program

The largest native birds in North America will be returning to Oregon after a 97-year absence.

Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton and U.S. Senator Gordon Smith announced October 19 that the Oregon Zoo has been accepted as a member of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's California Condor Recovery Program, and will build the nation's fourth condor breeding facility. Existing condor breeding facilities are operated by the San Diego Wild Animal Park, the Los Angeles Zoo and the World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho.

"Saving the California condor is a model of what we can do -- and what we must do -- to save our endangered wildlife" Secretary Norton said. "I commend the Oregon Zoo for their efforts to obtain this designation and we look forward to a long-term partnership that will increase the number of California Condors in the wild."

Plans are for the zoo to receive six young condors, possibly as early as summer of 2002, and to build a facility on Metro open space, which will hold up to 16 breeding pairs by fall of 2003. The breeding facility will be constructed at a secluded site, off zoo grounds where there is minimal noise and no close public contact.

"It is important that the condors not get used to people, and pains will be taken so the condors don't bond with or associate with humans. If they become unafraid of humans, they put themselves in jeopardy when released into the wild," Zoo Director Tony Vecchio said. "We appreciate Metro's strong commitment to save endangered species by providing the site for the new condor breeding facility. We could not accomplish this important goal without Metro's generous support."

According to Metro Executive Officer Mike Burton, "What's great about this is that it's a marriage between two of Metro's most significant programs. The conservation efforts of the Oregon Zoo and the regions open spaces program."

Voters in 1995 provided $135.6 million to purchase open spaces to be protected from development. One of those open spaces will be chosen for the condor breeding facility.

"Without voters support to purchase open spaces this project could not have been realized," continued Burton.

There are no immediate plans to exhibit condors at the zoo, although that remains a future possibility.

Funds for the $1.8 million facility will be raised from foundations and private sources.

With 16 breeding pairs, the Oregon Zoo would be able to contribute up to 32 young condors per year. The first set of 16 eggs each year will be sent to one of the existing breeding facilities for rearing. The second set of eggs will be parent-reared in Oregon.

The recovery objectives of the California Condor Recovery Team are to maintain a captive flock of at least 150 birds across several holding facilities and to release to the wild captive-bred condors to establish two separate, free-flying populations of 150 birds each. There are currently 126 captive and 57 free-flying birds.

The idea of bringing condors back to Oregon originated in a brainstorming meeting about how the Oregon Zoo could participate in the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, slated for 2005-2006. Lewis and Clark saw condors along the Columbia River between The Dalles and Astoria. Their first sighting was on Oct. 28, 1805. In their journals, they refer to them as the "beatifull Buzzard of the columbia (sic)." They killed one and carefully examined and weighed it, making thorough notes in their journal about the 9' 2" wingspan, red head and whitish patches under the wings.

Condor bones at least 9,000 years old have been unearthed by archeologists in Oregon Indian middens, and the condor is still a common design motif in the traditional art of Wasco Indians, who lived